

THE

WANT OF FIDELITY

IN

MINISTERS OF RELIGION

RESPECTING THE

NEW POOR LAW.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS SPENCER, M.A.,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF HINTON CHARTERHOUSE, NEAR BATH;
FORMERLY FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE;
AND DURING SIX YEARS A GUARDIAN
OF THE BATH UNION.

"Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; BUT AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS SHALL THEY HEAR TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."—
2 Tim. 4 ch. 2 v.

ELEVENTH THOUSAND.

LONDON:

CHARLES GILPIN, 5, BISHOPSGATE STREET, WITHOUT;
AND SAMUEL GIBBS, 5, UNION STREET, BATH.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

No. 10.

1844.

[First Thousand printed May, 1841.]

THE WANT OF FIDELITY IN MINISTERS OF RELIGION RESPECTING THE NEW POOR LAW.

HAD sound principles been promulgated from every pulpit, our land would not now be distinguished amongst the nations of Europe for ignorance, pauperism, drunkenness, and crime. The business of ministers of religion is to teach men to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and to train up a peculiar people zealous of good works. They are not to handle the word of God deceitfully, but so fairly to set forth the Scripture that it may be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 16. Instead of which, they have too generally occupied the attention of their hearers with curious questions and sectarian strife. The motives which induce such unfaithful preaching are as dishonourable as the preaching itself is mischievous. National abuses have, in every congregation, their representatives. The men who, for gain, deluge the streets with gin, and those who enrich themselves by Poor Law abuses, sit in the chief seats of the church or chapel; and, because they display great zeal for their party, though it be a zeal which leads men to bite and devour one another, they are recognised as members of a Christian church. In their presence it is no easy task to speak the truth. It is easier with the hundreds of prophets to flatter Ahab, than with a single Micaiah to speak that which is evil concerning him. It is easier to display eloquence, than to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort." It is easier to dwell upon those topics of religion which interest the imagination, than to insist upon those self-denying principles which improve the heart and rectify the life. It is easier to preach about foreign missions, past prophecies, with their future fulfilments, and to set forth the doctrines commonly called evangelical, than to enforce upon all men a life of labour and of self-support. Much of the religious profession of our day is united with great pride and little honesty; with little brotherly kindness, and still less of common sense.

The first teachers taught repentance; but they also required "fruits meet for repentance:" they taught their hearers faith; but it was a "faith that worketh by love and fulfilleth the law;" and they reproved them when their faith was barren and unfruitful. Of the sermons of Christ, and of the epistles of the Apostles, a large portion is occupied in enforcing practical duties: whereas a modern sermon, as long as one of those epistles, frequently closes without one word bearing upon the duties of common life. The Apostles taught their hearers to be diligent in business; to provide things honest in the sight of all men; and to owe no man any thing. They worked as well as taught; and they followed up their good example by this universal precept, "that

ye study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you : that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." Christ and his Apostles expounded the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother," as including a support of them in their old age. The Apostles did not invent excuses for him that stole or that coveted other men's goods ; but they besought him to "labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

He that neglects his own trade or profession whereby he might provide for the present and future wants of his family, under the pretence of spending his time in prayer, in reading the scripture, in hearing sermons, in attending religious meetings, or in assisting religious societies, is a dishonest man ; and were it not that his conscience, through false teaching, is unenlightened, he would be no better than a robber. Seeing, as he might, that his family may become chargeable to the parish or to the subscriptions of charitable persons, he picks their pockets in anticipation ; and though in his secret thoughts he relies on such future aid, he would no more dare to tell the parties beforehand that he relies upon them for his future subsistence, than the pickpocket would tell the victim whose money he was intending to appropriate. That which he calls trusting in providence is, in reality, tempting providence. Men that forsake the diligent application to some trade or profession, and through a fancied regard for religion require appeals to the benevolent in their own lifetime, or for their families after their death, ought to be reminded that the declaration of that religion is, "If any would not work, neither should he eat."

If to a congregation accustomed to the usual style of evangelical preaching, a sermon were preached upon any of these passages, entering into the same minute detail as is usual in sermons on other texts, many of the self-styled spiritual part of the congregation would take offence, and declare that it was *mere morality* ; *downright legality* ; and that the preacher held the dangerous heresy of *salvation by works* ! Dare these men preach the whole counsel of God ? Are there not parts which they have shunned to declare ? They say that they preach justification by faith : so did the Apostle Peter ; yet he also enjoins, "And beside all this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful ;--but he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off." The Apostle Paul preached "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ ;" yet he thus expresses himself ; "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection ; not laying again the *foundation* of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms and

of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Heb. vi. 1, 2. He then cautions "those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come," to beware lest they fall away through want of diligent attention to the duties of religion, and that without fruitfulness in every good word and work, the means of grace will prove to them a curse, and not a blessing; "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing of God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

In these days the ministers of religion are chiefly known to the people by their endless appeals for money. Whether it be for new churches or chapels, for pastors at home or missionaries abroad, the perpetual cry is 'give, give;' and a stranger would naturally infer that the only thing required for the conversion of the world is a plentiful supply of gold and silver. Yet the Apostle, whose single sermon made three thousand converts, could say, "silver and gold have I none;" and another Apostle, who says, "From Jerusalem and round about unto Illyrium I have fully preached the gospel of Christ," could also declare to the assembled ministers at Ephesus, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel." It is true that he collected voluntary subscriptions for the relief of the destitute, but he asked nothing for pastoral or missionary purposes; nobly desiring that he and other preachers should present the gospel without charge, recommending it thereby to the favourable consideration of all men. Respecting his exertions for the poor, he says, "Now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints; for it hath pleased them of Macedonia to make a contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." Whereas to the Ephesian ministers he gives no encouragement to seek for more ample funds for themselves, but, on the contrary, warns them against the covetous practices which should gradually creep in among them; he says, "After my departure grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock." These are the "dumb dogs that cannot bark, greedy dogs that can never have enough." These are they that "run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." In opposition to this he urges them to imitate the example which he had set, and which he thus describes, "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so LABOURING ye ought to SUPPORT THE WEAK, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'it is more blessed to GIVE than to RECEIVE.'" How superior is this to that preaching of a barren divinity which takes so large a portion of the people's wealth for the support of ministers, whilst the *poor* and the *weak* are sent to a parish to be maintained by a compulsory tax levied upon industry!

Can we wonder that gold is the object of a nation's idolatry when ministers of religion display such eagerness to obtain it? The demand is not so much for a field of labour as for a good living. The question is not what opportunities of usefulness present themselves, but how great is the income, and how small the duty? Nor is this peculiar to the established church. The question propounded by the ambitious dissenter is, How far is the congregation distinguished by respectability? Are they sufficiently intelligent to appreciate superior talent? Can they provide a handsome income for a popular preacher? With an income of six millions to the established church, and a large amount to dissenting ministers and religious institutions—whilst the national expenditure annually exceeds the national income—whilst the country is groaning under an overwhelming debt—whilst bankruptcy becomes painfully common, ministers of religion have ceased to hold up to men a standard of self-denying industry and of moral integrity, and have given their sanction to a system of begging and of debt. Places of worship are erected with borrowed money; and religious societies, however liberal the contributions of the public, intentionally exceed their income. And this perpetually getting into debt is used as a perpetual plea for increasing supplies from the people. With such an example set by ministers of religion, it is not surprising that debt, begging, and bankruptcy descend from the pulpit and platform to the shop of the tradesman and to the fireside of the mechanic; and that, under the pretence of trusting in providence, men become bankrupt without shame, and defraud their creditors without remorse.

There is too great a distinction made between ministers of religion and other men; and it is owing to this that so many leave the ordinary pursuits of life in order to live upon their congregations. If the desire to do good were the only inducement—if the love of ease and emolument formed no part—then would there be more persons ready to labour even without remuneration. The late Rev. C. Simeon, of Cambridge, declared to the students of the University who attended his ministry, that their particular business was to attend to the studies of the College; and that they had no right to read the Bible when they ought to be reading mathematics. He stated, that, whenever young men relinquished these studies under the pretence of reading divinity, he had always found that their reading divinity was synonymous with idleness and ignorance. If young men are now permitted to occupy their time with divinity, to the neglect of honest pursuits, without such rebuke, it may be accounted for by another expression which I heard Mr. Simeon use—"The time was when evangelical ministers were like a river that was very narrow, but very deep; but now they are as a river that is very broad and very shallow."

A distinguished dissenting minister, Dr. Bennett, has recently delivered a series of lectures on church history, in which, when speaking of the theology of the early church, he informed his auditors that the nearer we approach to the time of the Apostles, the purer was the

church; that after the second century there was a great falling off from the simplicity of the gospel: yet in the high estimate which he elsewhere gives of the study of divinity, he appears to forget his own statement that there were no divines or theologians in the first two centuries. These are his words, "Three centuries the church lived with but one biblical scholar—Origen, and not one that could be called a divine:" "theology, in its highest sense, the science of divine revelation, was to the early church unknown." Yet that early church was the purest, and was content to draw its doctrines from the scriptures alone. Again, he says, "Of election little was said before Augustine's time:" "the depravity of human nature never obtained the share of attention which its importance demanded:" "of the atonement it is afflicting to observe how sparingly and inadequately the fathers speak:" "the sacraments are scarcely, if at all, mentioned in the first century." From all which it appears that the topics of modern divinity and of pulpit oratory, were seldom alluded to when the church was purest; but that when preachers sought to be good divines rather than good men—when they turned from the glaring evils which afflict society, and devoted themselves to abstruse points of theology, the church degenerated. These are Dr. Bennett's words, "Christian morals manifestly deteriorate as we advance to Clement and Origen, and Christians are compared to the polypus, which takes the colour of anything to which it happens to adhere. Lewdness and drunkenness are charged even upon the ministers of religion. On death, departed souls, the resurrection, immortality, antichrist, and the millenium, a farrago of truth and error is uttered, though the apostolic fathers are free from this censure."

Had there been less study of divinity and more regard to the duties of common life; had religion propagated itself, not by abstract theories, but as in the first century, by the bright shining of example, and by simplicity of preaching, Christianity would not be the mere name, which it now is to most, and an object of contempt to many. If the prophet Ezekiel were to address the eloquent divines of the present day, it is to be feared that his language would be, "Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. O, Israel! thy prophets are like the foxes of the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle. They have seen VANITY and lying DIVINATION." How can they be without excuse who, in the midst of a pauperised and drunken poor, and with legal dishonesty and political turpitude amongst the rich, instead of "warning every man and teaching every man," after the manner of the Apostle, are content with the applause of an admiring audience! Surely the same responsibility attaches to them as to the prophets of old, if they are wanting in fidelity: "When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked

man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand."

When external profession takes the place of real piety; when indiscriminate almsgiving usurps the province of judicious benevolence; when indolence feeds on state pensions or on parish pay; when members of parliament, elected by bribery and intimidation, yet falsely pretending to be the representatives of the people, uphold oppressive laws; and when the degraded multitudes betake themselves to the intoxicating cup for comfort; then is the command given to every minister of religion, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and shew my people their transgressions." To the clergy who receive the tithes, and to the dissenting ministers who receive the pew rents from the congregations to whom they speak smooth things, and from whom they keep back all faithful admonitions, the language of scripture is, "Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock. The DISEASED HAVE YE NOT STRENGTHENED, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them: my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."

The prophet Jeremiah gives an unfailling test of a true teacher. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood IN MY COUNSEL, and had caused my people to hear MY WORDS, THEN THEY SHOULD HAVE TURNED THEM FROM THEIR EVIL WAY AND FROM THE EVIL OF THEIR DOINGS." Jeremiah xxiii. 21. And as to studying the writings or preaching the doctrines of divines, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore behold I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour." Whoever will read the memoir of Pastor Oberlin will see the Christian pastor in perfection; and in the lives of Scott and Cecil, two of the early evangelical ministers, he will find that they gave great offence to many religious professors by the practical nature of their preaching. It would be well if the successors of these men would more frequently deserve this reproach. It would be a proof of fidelity, and well for society, if, as in their case, the mere professors of religion should depart because they had been exhorted to "cease to do evil, and to learn to do well."

The shrewd John Bunyan, in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, shows that there were religious professors in his day, who avoided those parts of religion which bring self-denial, trouble, and persecution, but who "delight to talk of the history or the mystery of things," and who "love to talk of miraeles, wonders, or signs." The following is the

reply which he represents Talkative as giving to Faithful: "To talk of such things is most profitable; for by so doing a man may get knowledge of many things; as of the vanity of earthly things, and the benefit of things above. A man may learn the necessity of the new birth; the insufficiency of our works; the need of Christ's righteousness; what it is to repent, to believe, to pray, to suffer, or the like; what are the great promises or consolations of the gospel to his own comfort; to refute false opinions, to vindicate the truth, and also to instruct the ignorant." Talkative further assures Faithful that he could give him a hundred scriptures to prove that "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven; and that all is of grace, not of works." Indeed so learned a divine is he, that when Faithful asked him upon what subject they should found their discourse, Talkative replied, "What you will; I will talk of things heavenly or of things earthly; things moral or things evangelical; things sacred or things profane; things past or things to come; things foreign or things at home; things more essential or things circumstantial; provided that all be done to our profit."

One of the favourite occupations of ministers of religion is to rail at the Church of Rome; yet they meanwhile appropriate to themselves all the infallibility of the Pope, and usurp his power of excommunication; and whilst they revile, there are ministers of that church doing more real service than all that these protestant revilers have ever done. Father Mathew, in taking the intoxicating cup from the lips of Ireland's sons, exhibits unwearied zeal, united with Christian meekness and sound judgment; whereas we find Dr. Edgar, the protestant PROFESSOR of DIVINITY, at Belfast, deerying this remedy for drunkenness; satisfying himself with giving lectures on divinity; and despising the practical man who has thus been instrumental in "binding up that which was broken, and bringing again that which was driven away, and seeking that which was lost." In a letter recently published, he says, "I entertain the most confirmed abhorrence of teetotalism, as insulting to God and disgraceful to man." Teetotalism has done good to millions, and harm to none. It has brought thousands to places of worship, and has restored health, peace, and prosperity to them and their families; yet because it interferes with the vested interests of the maker and seller of strong drink, there are many ministers who dare not oppose the vice of drunkenness lest they should offend some influential member of their congregation. In England we profess to be astonished at the cowardly conduct of the ministers of religion of the United States; we are accustomed to say that they are silent upon the horrors of slavery, because it would be attended with serious consequences if they were to speak boldly as they ought to speak; but we may notice the same want of fidelity at home respecting the slavery into which the drinking customs of our land have brought the mass of the people. "I am in a ticklish situation," said a dissenting minister to me, "I am in a ticklish situation,"

repeated this pastor of a flock, *nominally* INDEPENDENT, in the presence of all who were about to take part in a Temperance meeting. And what was his situation? He wished to favour the cause of Temperance, but one of the most influential members of his congregation was the largest innkeeper in the town, and another was a brewer!

That this silence on subjects which deeply affect the national welfare is not confined to a small number of dissenting ministers, abundant proof could be furnished. The *Patriot*, indeed, states, that "the protestant dissenting ministers of this country are emphatically the teachers of the people, especially of the middle classes, and have a very large share in guiding public opinion;" yet in the anniversary of the Religious Freedom Society, as reported in the columns of that paper, we find the Rev. Mr. Giles, of Leeds, himself a dissenting minister, complaining bitterly of dissenting ministers in general "for their fear of speaking out on account of the more wealthy and influential members of their congregations. It was not of the people he was afraid, but of ministers of religion, and of a few rich people in the congregation whispering in their ears." He added, "I know they will see a few half-hearted friends shrinking from their pews, but the question is, are we to instruct the people, or are they to instruct us? Are we to speak the truth when it is popular, or when it is not? When it is needed, or when it is not? Are we to enlighten the people when they are in the full blaze of meridian sunshine, or when they are in the dark? I maintain that we, as ministers of religion, must stand forward, look on this as our work, and determine, in the name of God, that the work shall be done."

Some ministers of religion flatter themselves that pauperism is an evil with which they have nothing to do; and others have shown such ignorance of human nature and of Christianity as to express a wish to see almshouses erected in every parish, and to see the poor comfortably provided for, without any care of their own: yet Christ himself, who was able to provide abundantly for all, suffered his disciples to hunger, and before he fed them, he permitted the multitude to be with him three days, as a test of the purity of the motives which induced them to come to him; and when they followed him again, in the hope of a similar repast, he sent them away with this just rebuke, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." John vi. 26. In like manner when God himself led the Israelites through the wilderness, he permitted them to suffer hunger that he might "humble them and prove them and do them good in their latter end:" and when, having food and raiment, they were not therewith content, he brought upon them fresh trials. In the 21st chapter of Numbers, we read, "And the people spake against God and against Moses, wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people,

and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." The Apostles themselves so distributed the funds placed at their disposal as to cause murmuring among certain widows; a class at the present time most covetous of parish pay, and also the chief murmurers. When the deacons were chosen, they acted partly as Guardians of the poor and partly as preachers of the gospel. Timothy was a bishop, yet the Apostle Paul instructs him minutely on the subject of pauperism, and especially urges him to prevent imposition.

Not only were ministers of religion always connected with the relief of the poor, but in all ages ecclesiastical property has been partly devoted to this purpose. Under the Mosaic dispensation it was said, "At the end of every three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year; and the Levite and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow which are within thy gates, shall come and shall eat and be satisfied." Deut. xiv. 28. Valuable as was the time of the Apostle Paul, and indifferent as he was to his own wealth, even to the extent of refusing the hire, of which, as a labourer, he was worthy, yet he was frequently engaged in collecting subscriptions for the supply of food to the Christians who were suffering through famine. The funds of the Roman Catholic Church were partly appropriated to the support of the poor. The property of the Church of England was in like manner vested in the Clergy, as trustees, for the support of themselves, for the service of the church, and for the relief of the poor.

If the clergy had always preached sound doctrine, and had endeavoured to discountenance indolence and the love of gifts—if the enormous wealth of the bishops and rich incumbents had been appropriated to the relief of unavoidable destitution—if dissenting ministers had proved themselves true shepherds by driving their flocks from the withering pastures of pauperism—if every denomination had taken charge of its own poor, as the Quakers have done, we should not now have to speak of pauperism as the disgrace, and of poor rates as the oppression, of England.

In Scotland the poor are relieved more nearly after the apostolic manner. The contributions are voluntary, and they vary according to the destitution of those who receive and to the munificence of those who give; and on these two things they ought to depend. And although there are in Scotland many evils caused by intemperance, and although the soil is far less fertile than that of England, yet the people are better educated, more industrious, more frugal, and more independent. It is to Scotland that we apply for trustworthy stewards and overlookers, and for well-qualified schoolmasters. In England also relief to the poor was once an affair of the congregation and minister. It was administered by churchwardens; to the church congregation notice was given when a rate was required; in the church vestry it was determined whether such rate should be granted; there the money was paid to the poor; and of the vestry which decided these matters the clergyman was the chairman. It was obviously

connected with ministers of religion from first to last. Those of the clergy who performed these arduous duties faithfully, gained an insight into the subject of pauperism, and have since been the strenuous supporters of the New Poor Law as an attempt to diminish its evils; whilst those who deemed themselves too spiritual to preside at a pay table, are perpetually blundering in such matters. In a pamphlet entitled, "The Pauper's Advocate; a cry from the brink of the grave against the New Poor Law," Samuel Roberts, the author, says that the clergy in general are favourable to this law, and that they frequently act as guardians under it. Without intending it, he has borne an honourable testimony to those clergymen who, by their preaching, writing, and active services, have endeavoured to revive in the poor their former spirit of industry and manly independence. The compliment which he pays to dissenting ministers, if deserved by them, would be an argument against the prevailing system of dissent; inasmuch as it would show that the ministers chosen and maintained by the people are either too ignorant to understand the nature of pauperism, or so completely at the mercy of their congregations for a maintenance, that they dare not bring before them the whole counsel of God. Can this be the explanation of the phenomenon that dissent has rendered so little aid to the country, in her hour of need, against the combined forces of depraved pauperism, political hypocrisy, and sordid self-interest? Have dissenting ministers fearlessly defended this unpopular law, so important as a first step towards the freedom of charity? Have they not been silent except on one or two minor points which affect their sectarian interests?

Perhaps no one suffers so much from the want of fidelity in the ministers of religion as the pauper himself. He that is born, reared, married, supported, and buried, at the cost of others, is a FAILURE IN CREATION, and is utterly unprepared to give an account of his stewardship. He is the barren fig tree which cumbers the ground, and is not only unproductive but absolutely injurious. A man who hides his one talent in a napkin, under the plea that some had five, and others ten talents, should be taught that he is responsible for the use of that one. False friends may soothe him in the troubles which he brings upon himself, but a time is coming when he will lament that ever he saw such friends. In this world of trial no man may act for another or make atonement unto God for him. Those persons take a wrong view of the poor man's condition who encourage him to rely upon charitable funds. Such funds can only exist through the instrumentality of industrious men; and it is a low sense of justice that so readily takes the earnings of the industrious to give to those whom capricious charity may think fit to patronise. Despotie and selfish men wish to have the lower classes as dependent upon them as possible; therefore they look with more favour upon the pauper and the criminal, who eringe to them for support, than upon the independent labourer, who will neither fawn nor flatter. The poor man, however,

stands upon the same level with other men, and must give an account of the deeds done in the body. He is invited to fight the same good fight, and to run in the same honourable race; and, therefore, that man is guilty of cruel treachery who leads him to rely upon other men; who teaches him to evade the general law, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread." The best affections of paupers are invariably destroyed. Parents learn to regard their children as a source of gain; and children in their turn expect to derive profit from their aged parents. It is not uncommon for them to refuse to perform the slightest office for each other except paid for by the parish. This utter absence of all proper feeling is owing to legalised charity; and it is the province of ministers of religion to turn the hearts of such fathers to their children, and of such children to their fathers.

Much has been said respecting compulsory religion and church rates; and but little respecting compulsory charity and poor-rates. Yet charity is greater than faith; and if true faith may be left to propagate itself, still more so may true charity. It is much more probable that the inhabitants of a parish, if allowed to follow their own feelings, would neglect to support a place of worship, than that they would permit a fellow-creature to die in the street. Church rates are a serious evil, but in the outcry against them, the dissenter seems to forget, that poor rates involve the same evil in a higher degree. If six hundred Unions erect chapels in their workhouses, appoint to each a chaplain, and provide for each, fittings up, surplices, books, and sacramental wine, out of the poor rates; if, out of the same poor rates, the borough and county rates are taken, from which the salaries are paid to the chaplains of all the gaols in the kingdom; if the fees for the burial of all the paupers and criminals are taken from the same rate, is it not clear that the money forcibly obtained from the dissenter, under the pretence of charity, is a greater grievance than that collected under the pretence of propagating the Christian faith? Wherein does the difference consist? How is it that dissenting ministers can discourse at great length respecting religious freedom, and desecant upon the evils of India and the oppression of Africa, and yet not say one word in defence of the unpopular poor law, of the freedom of charity, and of the deliverance of the poor from the bondage of pauperism!

Spurious charity prevails to an alarming extent, and it is the province of ministers of religion to expose and check it. It is for them to show that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet not have charity; that he may make long prayers, and pay tithes of all that he possesses, and yet be a hypocrite. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour;" whereas false charity professing unbounded benevolence, when thwarted in its plans, or when confronted by men who do not approve of its proceedings, exhibits the most angry passions, gives vent to the most savage expressions, and is guilty of the most cruel deeds.

Instead of trying to place charity upon its right foundation, dissenters are endeavouring to obtain certain privileges for their paupers

in the Union workhouses ; but the more they obtrude their dissenting inmates before the public, the more they will expose their own ignorance of the nature of pauperism and of Christianity. Do dissenting ministers wish to send forth their paupers as their epistles, to be known and read of all men ? Bad indeed then is the handwriting ; and wretched the sentiments inscribed thereon ! Are these their burning and shining lights to which they would direct the people's gaze ? There is a wide difference between the Bible-poor and the pauper-poor : the true Christian is humbled by his afflictions and corrected by his sufferings ; and on the first opportunity, he escapes from his poverty and provides for himself ; whereas the pauper clings to the outward badges of poverty, and feigns them, if he has them not. Take away his rags and cleanse his person, and to-morrow the good apparel you have given him will be in pawn, and you will again see him in rags and filth ; for, were he to appear as respectable as you left him, he would lose many of his benefactors. Of the numbers admitted in a given time into the Bath Union workhouse, 1681 were churchmen and 93 dissenters ; of the burials during that time, there had been 214 churchmen and 15 dissenters. Of the adults in the house on the 12th of May, 1841, 289 were churchmen and 23 were dissenters. If dissenting churches will not maintain their own poor, then, instead of demanding that these 23 shall come out of the house to attend their meetings on Sundays, let their ministers avail themselves of the privilege which the law allows, of assembling them at suitable times for religious instruction within the house. The law does not offer a salary for this, but it permits the shepherd who is not a hireling to come and look after his own sheep ; and if any impediment be thrown in their way by the forms of the house or by the rules of the Poor Law Commissioners, let them petition the legislature for the removal of such impediments. Let them point out any one of the 23 pauper dissenters whom they regard as a sincere Christian. I know a large Union workhouse the master of which is a conscientious dissenter, who has discharged his duties faithfully to the satisfaction of all the guardians ; and with this master, after he had held his office about eighteen months, I had the following conversation :—

What did you think of the workhouse when you first entered upon your duties ? I was astonished at the good things provided for the inmates. I would not desire better provisions for my own family ; I had no conception that so much was done for the poor.

Have you found the paupers thankful for all that is done for them ? Not at all. They always speak of it as their right. They say the house was built for them ; that the poor-rates are for them ; and that the officers are paid to wait on them. I have been astonished to see how little care they take of the property of the Union ; they will commit injury to the furniture and to their clothes, and will waste their food without the least scruple.

How many religious persons do you suppose there may be amongst

them? I can speak with confidence of only one, whom I have frequently seen engaged in a room by himself, in a most devout manner. He is blind and deaf; and, perhaps, on this account, he has escaped the contaminating influence of their conversation.


Is the language of the paupers so corrupting? It is shocking; and, indeed, the chief evil that those of a better sort have to complain of, is the constant quarrels, oaths, and disgusting conversation of the inmates of the ward in which they live.

Are there no others, besides the blind man, of whose religion you entertain some hope? There are three or four aged women of whom I am inclined to think favourably.

A similar testimony was given me by the excellent chaplain of that workhouse, who informed me that in every instance in which he had looked upon any inmate as actuated by religious principles, circumstances had occurred which completely destroyed his hopes.

Because true religion is respected and trusted, it is counterfeited: because real poverty is pitied and relieved, it is imitated: and if to the poor amongst dissenters the law should attach privileges, the pauper dissenters will become more numerous. There is no way of obtaining money which an indolent man will not adopt in preference to his daily toil. There is no creed that pauperism would not readily profess to gain the privilege of wandering about from house to house, begging and drinking. The complaints of the inmates of a workhouse in Bath, before the formation of the Union, induced the overseer to order that the privilege of attending their respective places of worship, which the assistant overseer had denied, should be restored. Coming to the workhouse on the Sunday evening to observe the order in which they returned, he had the mortification of witnessing every one of them returning in a state of intoxication. He instantly gave up his own order, and requested the assistant overseer to proceed as before. This fact I had from the overseer himself. In those churches in which the sacrament money is distributed amongst the poor persons who have partaken of the sacrament, there is an overflowing attendance of the poor upon this solemn ordinance. The service for the churching of women has been similarly abused. The curate of a large parish in Bath gave a gratuity to women who came to be churched, thinking that, after their confinement, they were objects of sympathy. The rapid increase in the number of women who came to be churched having led him to make inquiry, he discovered that many of them had never had children at all, but that they had gone through the ceremony of churching in order to obtain the gifts. In like manner the chaplain of a Union workhouse informed me that he had been in the habit of giving money to some of the inmates on their leaving the workhouse; but that many had left the house for the purpose of obtaining his gratuity, and having spent it at a public house, returned to the workhouse in a state of intoxication. In course of time an inmate came to the chaplain's residence and demanded the *halfcrown*

which was given to those who left the workhouse; and on the demand being refused, she flew into a rage, and declared she had a right to it. With such facts before us, will it be wise to confer on all inmates of workhouses who choose to call themselves dissenters, the privilege of going out once a-week? I think not. Let dissenting ministers take in their turn the office of guardian; instead of foolish and unlearned questions in divinity, which do gender strifes, let them become acquainted with pauper habits. Let them visit their poor brethren if they desire it; but let them not incur the risk of encouraging pauperism and hypocrisy; and let all the ministers of religion discourage in the poor the desire of gifts. Let them remind their people that the account they must one day give, will not be of what others have done for them, but of what they have done for themselves. Let them teach the young that the first prayer for themselves, which they are commanded to offer, is for daily bread; and that the first duty which they are commanded to perform, is to earn it. Let them discover the obstacles which impede the prosperity of the labouring man, and seek the removal of all laws which bear unjustly upon him. Let them procure for industry free scope, that diligence and good conduct may obtain their reward. Set before the young man the facilities which provident institutions will afford him to provide for himself and family in the time of adversity, sickness, and old age. If ignorant, place within his reach the means of instruction; if desponding, rouse his energies; bid him rise to the first duty of man—self-support; but do not support him. Do not render him worthless, by doing for him that which God has given him to do, and for the doing of which he must give account.

 *Each of the following Tracts, (price 2d.) by the Rev. T. Spencer, weighs, with an envelope, less than half an ounce:*

- 1.—THE PILLARS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND10th Thousand.
- 2.—THE PRAYER BOOK OPPOSED TO THE CORN LAWS.....17th Thousand.
- 3.—RELIGION AND POLITICS15th Thousand.
- 4.—PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ON CHURCH REFORM11th Thousand.
- 5.—REMARKS ON NATIONAL EDUCATION..... 9th Thousand
- 6.—CLERICAL CONFORMITY AND CHURCH PROPERTY16th Thousand.
- 7.—THE PARSON'S DREAM AND THE QUEEN'S SPEECH18th Thousand.
- 8.—THE OUTCRY AGAINST THE NEW POOR LAW10th Thousand.
- 9.—THE NEW POOR LAW, ITS EVILS, AND THEIR REMEDIES.. 4th Thousand.
- 10.—WANT OF FIDELITY IN MINISTERS OF RELIGION11th Thousand.
- 11, 12, 13, 14.—REASONS FOR A POOR LAW CONSIDERED, Parts 1, 2, 3, 4.
- 15.—THE REFORMED PRAYER BOOK.....6th Thousand.
- 16.—THE SECOND REFORMATION19th Thousand.
- 17.—THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS: AND HOW TO GET THEM 21st Thousand.
- 18.—OBSERVATIONS UPON THE DIOCESAN SCHOOL RETURN ..25th Thousand.
- 19.—WHAT DAVID DID:—A REPLY TO THE QUEEN'S LETTER 26th Thousand.

Any number of the above tracts, for sale or distribution, will be forwarded, on application to the Author, at half price, such application containing an order for payment.

LONDON: CHARLES GILPIN, 5, BISHOPGATE STREET, WITHOUT;
AND SAMUEL GIBBS, 5, UNION STREET, BATH.